



# SAMPLE NEWSLETTER ARTICLE



People with Medicare now have an opportunity to live healthier and longer lives thanks to a significant change in the Medicare program. Aided by passage of the Medicare Modernization Act (MMA), Medicare is shifting its focus from disease management to prevention. The goal is to reduce hundreds of thousands of annual deaths that occur from diseases that may be preventable, such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

Key features of the new preventive benefits are the “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam for people new to the Medicare program, and free cardiovascular and diabetes screenings. These new benefits have been added to an array of preventive services including: coverage for vaccinations, bone mass measurement, glaucoma screenings, medical nutrition therapy, and screenings for cancers of the colon, breast, cervix, and prostate.

Living a healthy lifestyle has long been recognized as the best way to stop health problems before they start. Today, a healthy lifestyle means doing things such as eating right, maintaining a healthy weight, staying active, and not smoking. It also includes the use of preventive services that can find potential health problems early, when treatment works best.

As the value of preventive services has become clear, Medicare services have been improved to provide coverage for these important screenings. Medicare now includes coverage for many services to keep people healthy, no matter what type of Medicare health plan they have.

## One-time “Welcome to Medicare” Physical Exam for New Enrollees

For people whose Medicare Part B coverage begins on or after January 1, 2005, Medicare will cover a one-time preventive physical exam within the first six months that they have Medicare Part B. The exam will include a thorough review of the new enrollee’s health including an electrocardiogram, education and counseling about preventive services, such as certain screenings and shots, and referrals for other care, if needed. The “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam is a great way for new enrollees to get up-to-date on important screenings and shots, and to talk with doctors about their family history and how to stay healthy.



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## Cardiovascular Screening

Medicare now covers cardiovascular screenings that check cholesterol and other blood fat (lipid) levels. An elevated cholesterol level increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. Lifestyle changes in diet and activity level may lower cholesterol and keep people healthy. Cholesterol-lowering medication, prescribed by a physician, may also help manage cholesterol levels.

## Diabetes Screening

Diabetes is a medical condition where the body doesn't make enough insulin or has a reduced response to insulin. The body needs insulin to use glucose (sugar) properly. People with diabetes have blood sugar levels that are too high, and high blood sugar levels are not good for their health. Free diabetes screening is now available to those at risk for the disease, which includes people who have high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, obesity, or a history of high blood sugar. Other risk factors may also qualify them for a free diabetes screening. People with Medicare should talk with their doctors to see if this screening is right for them and how often Medicare covers it.

## Cancer Screenings

Medicare also continues to cover routine cancer screenings including: mammograms and tests for detecting cervical and vaginal cancers for women, prostate cancer screenings for men, as well as colorectal cancer screenings.



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## Other Covered Services

Medicare also covers flu, pneumonia and Hepatitis B shots, bone mass measurements and glaucoma tests.

All of these important screenings and services can help people with Medicare live healthy lifestyles and stop potential health problems before they start.

## Closing the Prevention Gap

Medicare is working hard to close the “prevention gap”—the difference between the number of people with Medicare who **could** take advantage of preventive services and those who actually **do**. Closing this gap could save many thousands of lives as well as billions of dollars in avoidable medical expenses for preventable medical conditions. Unhealthy behaviors, such as inactive lifestyles, smoking and poor diet, lead to serious illnesses including: heart disease, diabetes, cancer, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, and emphysema.

For more specific information about these benefits and other Medicare preventive services, get a free copy of the ***Guide to Medicare's Preventive Services*** (CMS Pub. No.10110) at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) on the web when you select “Publications.” Or, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.